

THE HONORABLE JOHN C. COUGHENOUR

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON
AT SEATTLE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

v.

LEE MICHAEL GRIFFIN,

Defendant.

CASE NO. CR22-0070-JCC

ORDER

This matter comes before the Court on the parties' joint motion to proceed with a remote change of plea hearing (Dkt. No.17). For the reasons explained below, the Court GRANTS the motion.

Defendant is charged by Indictment with fifteen counts of bank fraud. (*See* Dkt. No. 129.) A change-of-plea hearing is scheduled for August 10, 2022 at 10 a.m. before United States Magistrate Judge Brian Tsuchida. (*See* Dkt. No. 16.) The parties ask to hold the hearing remotely via zoom video. (*See* Dkt. No. 17 at 1–2.)

Under the Court's current general orders, felony pleas and sentencings may proceed by video or telephone conferencing if "the district judge in a particular case finds for specific reasons that the plea or sentencing in that case cannot be further delayed without serious harm to the interests of justice." W.D. Wash. General Order 04-20 (March 30, 2020); *see* W.D. Wash. General Order 06-22 (June 20, 2022) (extending duration of General Order 04-20 through

1 September 18, 2022); *see also* W.D. Wash. General Order 04-22 (March 3, 2022) (allowing for
2 in-person courtroom use “at the discretion of the presiding judge”).

3 According to the parties, Defendant would like to enter a plea now to reduce the stress
4 and anxiety caused by the uncertainty of his case and ensure that the case can be resolved before
5 further health-related court closures become necessary. He also points out that it would be a
6 hardship to travel to Washington from Arizona to enter a plea. In this instance, the Court finds
7 that waiting until COVID-19 public health limitations are no longer necessary to hold
8 Defendant’s change of plea hearing would pose a serious harm to the interests of justice.

9 Accordingly, the parties’ joint motion (Dkt. No. 17) is GRANTED. The parties are
10 directed to contact Judge Tsuchida’s chambers regarding logistics for Defendant’s remote
11 change of plea hearing.

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13 DATED this 8th day of June 2022.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John C. Coughenour", written over a horizontal line.

John C. Coughenour
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE